

LIFE AND WORK OF BEHBUDIY

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Abstract: This article about is Mahmudkhoja Behbudiy (1875–1919). He was a prominent reformist, educator, writer, and journalist in Turkestan. As a leading figure in the Jadid movement, he pioneered educational reforms, advocating for modernized schools that combined religious and secular subjects. He founded the newspaper "Oyna", which became a crucial platform for discussing political, social, and cultural issues. His literary contributions include "Padarkush", the first modern Uzbek play, which highlighted the dangers of ignorance and the need for education. His reformist ideas, however, led to conflicts with Russian colonial authorities and conservative religious leaders. Arrested and executed by the Emir of Bukhara in 1919, Behbudiy became a martyr for enlightenment and progress. His legacy continues to influence discussions on education, national identity, and modernization in Central Asia.

Keywords: Mahmudkhoja Behbudiy, jadid movement, educational reform, Usul-i jadid, journalism in Turkestan, Oyna newspaper, Padarkush drama, Russian colonial rule, National identity, Central Asian modernization, Bukhara Emirate, enlightenment and reform, Turkestan intellectuals, islamic modernism, Cultural awakening.

Mahmudkhoja Behbudiy (1875–1919) was a prominent figure in the Jadid movement, an educator, writer, journalist, and reformer who played a crucial role in the cultural and intellectual awakening of Turkestan. His contributions to literature, education, and political thought significantly influenced the modernization of Central Asian society. This article explores Behbudiy's life, his reformist ideas, and his enduring legacy.

Mahmudkhoja Behbudiy was born in 1875 in Samarkand into a family of religious scholars. His upbringing was steeped in Islamic education, and he received training in traditional madrasas. However, unlike many of his contemporaries, Behbudiy was deeply influenced by modernist ideas spreading across the Muslim world, particularly from the Ottoman Empire, Egypt, and the Russian Empire.

Realizing the limitations of the traditional education system, he sought knowledge beyond the madrasas. He traveled to various regions, including Russia and the Middle East, where he became familiar with new teaching methods and progressive social movements. These experiences ignited his passion for educational reform and societal progress.

The Jadid movement, which emerged in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, aimed to modernize Muslim societies through education, literature, and social reform. Behbudiy was one of the most active members of this movement in Turkestan.

Behbudiy strongly advocated for the introduction of usul-i jadid (new method) schools, which emphasized secular subjects alongside religious education. He believed that traditional

madrasa education was outdated and that a new curriculum incorporating science, mathematics, history, and geography was necessary for the advancement of the Muslim community.

In 1903, he established one of the first Jadid schools in Samarkand. His school promoted critical thinking and modern pedagogical approaches, which were met with resistance from conservative religious scholars but embraced by progressive intellectuals and students.

Behbudiy recognized the power of the press in shaping public opinion and educating the masses. He launched one of the first Turkestan newspapers, "Oyna" (The Mirror), in 1913. This publication became a platform for discussing social, political, and cultural issues, advocating for reform, and exposing colonial injustices under Russian rule.

Through "Oyna," Behbudiy called for unity among Muslims, the promotion of native language and literature, and awareness of global political developments. His writings criticized corruption, ignorance, and the suppression of local identity by Russian colonial authorities.

Behbudiy was also a pioneer of Uzbek drama. His most famous work, "Padarkush" (The Patricide), written in 1913, was the first modern Uzbek play. The drama highlighted generational conflicts, the necessity of education, and the dangers of ignorance.

The play depicted a young man who, due to his lack of education and exposure to modern ideas, falls into a life of crime and ultimately kills his father. The tragedy served as an allegory for the decline of traditional society and the urgent need for enlightenment through education.

Behbudiy was deeply concerned with the socio-political conditions of Turkestan under Russian colonial rule. He supported constitutionalism, national identity, and the empowerment of Muslims through education and economic development. He actively participated in political movements advocating for greater autonomy and self-governance for Turkestan.

His ideas often clashed with both Russian authorities and conservative religious figures who viewed modernist reforms as a threat to traditional Islamic values. Despite opposition, Behbudiy remained steadfast in his belief that progress was only possible through knowledge and unity.

In 1919, during the political turmoil following the Russian Revolution, Behbudiy traveled to Bukhara. There, he was arrested by the forces of the Emir of Bukhara, who saw Jadid intellectuals as a threat to his authority. He was executed at the age of 44, becoming a martyr for the cause of enlightenment and reform.

Mahmudkhoja Behbudiy's contributions to education, literature, and political thought continue to inspire generations. His vision of a progressive, educated, and self-reliant Turkestan laid the foundation for future intellectual and national movements in Central Asia.

Today, Behbudiy is celebrated as a national hero in Uzbekistan and other Turkic nations. His ideas on education and modernization remain relevant, particularly in discussions on cultural identity, religious reform, and the role of education in societal development.

In conclusion, Mahmudkhoja Behbudiy was more than just a writer or educator; he was a visionary who dedicated his life to the betterment of his people. His legacy serves as a

testament to the power of knowledge and the enduring impact of those who strive for progress despite opposition. His martyrdom was a loss for Turkestan, but his ideas continue to shape the intellectual and cultural landscape of Central Asia.

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